DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 347 031 RC 018 724

AUTHOR Baldwin, Mark, Comp.; Seaberg, Anita, Comp.
TITLE 1991 Nature Educators of the Year Recognized by the Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History. Award Winners and Noteworthy Programs.
INSTITUTION Roger Tory Peterson Inst. of Natural History, Inc., Jamestown, NY.
PUB DATE 92
NOTE 17p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Awards; *Community Programs; Elementary Secondary Education; *Environmental Education; *Experiential Learning; *Outdoor Education; Program Descriptions; *School Activities; Teachers
IDENTIFIERS Natural History; *Nature Study; Roger Tory Peterson Institute of Natural History

ABSTRACT

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute's Nature Educators of the Year program recognizes teachers who have successfully implemented education programs that effectively connect children to nature, and that can be replicated by others. Two awards of $1,000 each were given in 1991. One of the recipients, Steven Prchal, is executive director of Sonoran Arthropod Studies, Inc., which educates the public about the importance of insects and other arthropods. The other recipient, Diane Temple, is a second grade teacher who integrates nature study into her students' curriculum through weekly nature walks. In the second part of the booklet, the following noteworthy programs are described: (1) an interactive nature radio program; (2) an animal rehabilitation program; (3) a curriculum on the local environment; (4) a community wildlife walk; (5) a wetland reclamation project; (6) nature education through legends and fables; (7) community bat education; (8) a prairie restoration project; (9) horticulture therapy for handicapped children; (10) bird walks for elementary students; (11) a preservation project for Florida scrub land; (12) environmental education for community decision makers; (13) a nestbox program for future farmers; (14) a citizen action project for local nature trails; (15) a middle school field research project; and (16) an ecological "All Species Day." Descriptions include the name and address of the project directors. (KS)

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1991
Nature Educators of the Year

Recognized by the
Roger Tory Peterson Institute
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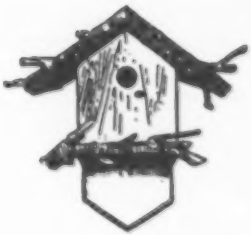

Award Winners
and
Noteworthy Programs

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1991
Nature Educators of the Year

A PROGRAM OF THE

Roger Tory Peterson Institute

of Natural History

Paul A. Benke
Executive Vice President

William S. Sharp
Director of Education Programs

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute gratefully acknowledges those who served on the awards selection committee: Dr. Allen Benton, Professor Emeritus, State University of New York College at Fredonia; James Yaich, Executive Director, Jamestown (NY) Audubon Society; and Carla Borrelli, biology teacher, Lake Shore Central School, Angola, NY.

This booklet was compiled by Mark Baldwin and Anita Seaberg.

Direct inquiries to:
Roger Tory Peterson Institute
110 Marvin Parkway
Jamestown, NY 14701
716/665-2473 FAX 716/665-3794

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The Roger Tory Peterson Institute

The founding trustees of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute have stated that the mission of the Institute is "to inform society about the natural world through the study and teaching of natural history." This statement of purpose is inspired by the life work and vision of Roger Tory Peterson, who believes that a basic understanding leads to a greater appreciation and respect for nature. His gift to humanity has been to open the eyes of the world, revealing to millions of ordinary people the marvelous diversity and beauty of nature. He has had a luminous effect on our appreciation and concern for the environment, beginning with publication of the most influential bird book of all time, *A Field Guide to the Birds*, now the cornerstone of the Peterson Field Guide Series.

The goal of the Roger Tory Peterson Institute is to foster a popular concern and passion for nature that will intensify our civilization's determination and capacity to understand, cherish, and preserve the natural environment. At the same time, increased personal knowledge of nature will improve the richness of people's lives.

Nature education and natural world experiences for children are fundamental to development of cultural and ecological literacy. Exposure to nature stimulates young students' curiosity and pursuit of knowledge.

Educators are increasingly aware that hands-on, outdoor nature study opportunities for children are essential to their maturing interest in learning, and their willingness to participate in science and the future of the environment. These experiences are exceptionally uncommon in today's society, and there is a need for a national initiative to turn the tide.

The Institute's programs are unique in that they are designed to enhance the teaching capabilities of the mentors of children—the teachers, parents, and other adults who guide children in discovering the magnificence of the natural world and its importance to our daily lives. The Roger Tory Peterson Institute offers

teacher workshops, annual national forums for nature educators, a preschool nature curriculum, publications for nature educators, and nature educator awards.

The Institute is a catalyst for change. It provides the energy and ideas for youthful nature experiences for children and people of all ages that will ultimately enhance the future of humanity and the environment.

Nature Educator Awards Program

In 1988, the Roger Tory Peterson Institute hosted a forum of nearly one hundred leading nature and environmental educators, who dealt with the issue of how we might overcome recognized barriers to improved environmental education. One recommendation that emerged from the forum was that the Institute establish a "Barrier Buster" award program.

The Institute's Nature Educators of the Year program, inaugurated in 1991, identifies and recognizes teachers who have successfully implemented education programs that effectively connect children to nature, and that can be replicated by others.

Two awards of $1,000 each were given in 1991: one to a teacher in a school setting and another to a nature educator in a community setting.

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute received 125 award nominations, among them many outstanding contributors to nature education. In this booklet you will read about the winners, Steven Prchal of Tucson, Arizona, and Diane Temple of Harvard, Massachusetts. We have also included brief synopsis of some great ideas that we feel others might be able to replicate in their own settings. All of the people listed have granted permission to be included in this booklet, and the reader is encouraged to contact them for further information.

1991
Nature Educators of the Year

CHILDREN ARE MORE EASILY INTRIGUED BY NATURE if they have inspiring teachers. The Roger Tory Peterson Institute named two outstanding teachers Nature Educators of the Year in 1991 to recognize publicly their achievements in sharing nature with children and the teachers of children. Awards were given to Tucson, Arizona, resident Steven Prchal for his community-based education work, and to Diane Temple for work in her Harvard, Massachusetts, school.

Steven Prchal's work epitomizes influential nature education. He is executive director of Sonoran Arthropod Studies, Inc. (SASI), a Tucson-based organization that strives to educate the public

Award winners Diane Temple and Steven Prchal were honored by Roger Tory Peterson, center, for their innovative programs that foster a popular caring and concern for the natural world. Temple leads weekly nature walks for school children, and Prchal educates the public about the importance of insects and other arthropods.

about insects and other arthropods. Prchal believes that arthropods are an ideal nature education vehicle because they can be found everywhere. "By taking a closer look at interrelationships in our own backyards—those of the arthropods—we can stimulate a lifelong interest in biology and conservation," he says.

Prchal himself was bitten—quite literally—by the natural history bug as a teenager. A rattlesnake bite inspired a deep interest in reptiles, which led to a personal "herps" collection and a job at the Arizona-Sonoran Desert Museum. Eventually his attention turned toarthropods.

Prchal's photography hobby caused him to look closely and become fascinated by insects, spiders, scorpions, and other crawling critters. In 1986, Prchal left the museum and founded SASI, supporting the group with his own savings.

He has worked as SASI's volunteer executive director since then, overseeing construction of the organization's physical facility in the Tucson Mountains and coordinating the volunteer staff. The group's dedicated workers lead workshops for teachers and entomologists, conduct popular school outreach programs and field trips, and organize family bug outings. SASI's journal, *Backyard BUGwatching*, goes to a small but enthusiastic membership. Prchal hopes the Nature Educator of the Year award will stimulate further public interest. "The greatest thing is the encouragement to continue along," he said, "to continue to move forward with innovative programs."

Temple's enthusiasm is equally infectious. She is a second grade teacher whose recent integration of nature study into her students' curriculum is inspiring other teachers at the school to do the same in their classrooms. Temple has taken her classes on nature field trips for years, but during the past school year she established weekly nature walks as an integral part of second grade. Trained volunteers from the local community help her guide the children on a nature trail near the school, and explain what there is to see and experience through the seasons.

Once back in the classroom, students draw on what they experienced that day. "The children keep a science journal," noted Temple. "We always talk about what we saw. We share

our results, and the children draw or write." Nature study fits right into the curriculum. Counts of insects that inhabit different areas along the nature trail stimulate students to create bar graphs and do other math projects.

Like many teachers, Temple was a novice to nature education—until 1990, when she attended a brief training workshop conducted by Massachusetts Audubon Society. Now she finds herself learning along with her students. Throughout the year, it is her enthusiasm rather than any special knowledge of nature or science that stimulates her class.

Staff at the Roger Tory Peterson Institute hope the award will stimulate more educators to do likewise. In granting this award, the Institute places emphasis on work that can be reproduced by others.

What Prchal and Temple are after, as is the Roger Tory Peterson Institute, is the sort of experience Temple recounts. "The last day we took nature walks," she recalled, "the children wrote poems and reflections on what they had enjoyed most, and we read those aloud. Then we checked our pit traps to see if we'd trapped anything, and we were moderately successful. As we were returning, one of my second graders turned to another and said, 'Boy, I just love science!'"

1991 Nature Educators of the Year

Steven J. Prchal, Director
Sonoran Arthropod Studies, Inc.
P.O. Box 5624
Tucson, AZ 85703

Diane Temple
Harvard Elementary School
27 Massachusetts Avenue
P.O. Box 273
Harvard, MA 01451

Other Noteworthy Programs

Interactive Nature Radio Program

Kenneth Brown has developed several interactive ways for the public to learn about nature: a weekly question and answer program on nature, titled "Field Notes" and nationally syndicated on public radio; a weekly newspaper column titled "Nature Detectives" that answers the public's questions about nature; and a club called Nature Detectives that involves children in informal yet meaningful research to stimulate their interest in nature.

Kenneth Brown
Senior Public Information Specialist
Adirondack Park Visitor Interpretive Center
P.O. Box 3000
Paul Smiths, NY 12970

Student Action Project: Animal Rehabilitation

Sam Chattin uses animal rehabilitation as the core of a unique junior high school science program. Seventh and eighth grade students at Scottsburg Junior High School have cared for some one thousand animals received from zoos, conservation officers, owners who no longer want their exotic pets, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The school is the only one in the world to be allowed by state and federal governments to rehabilitate, breed, and use endangered species for educational purposes.

Sam Chattin
Scottsburg Junior High School
South Third Street
Scottsburg, IN 47170

Curriculum on Local Environment

Barry W. Fox wrote a curriculum to teach fourth through ninth graders about the aquatic and marine resources around them as part of the Virginia 4-H Marine/Aquatic Education Program. Topics include submerged aquatic vegetation, nutrient enrichment, and soil erosion in the Chesapeake Bay; water pollution, marine resources and aquatic ecology.

Barry W. Fox, Extension Specialist
4-H Marine/Aquatic Education
Box 540, Virginia State University
Petersburg, VA 23803

Community Event: Wildlife Walk

Bob Gress developed an annual event called "Walk with Wildlife" to enable people to see wildlife that most people overlook on a hike on the trails of the Wichita area. During this one-day event, Gress organizes over eighty volunteers who staff learning centers along the mile-long route that display a variety of mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. In addition to attracting thousands of participants, "Walk with Wildlife" coordinates the efforts of many organizations and agencies to promote Kansas wildlife.

Robert J. Gress
Naturalist/Director
WICHITA WILD
11th Floor, City Hall, 445 North Main St.
Wichita, KS 67202

Student Action Project: Wetland Reclamation

Wendy Hanophy and her high school biology students cleaned up a neighboring wetland that had been used as a dump, conducted an intensive planting program, and turned it into an outdoor nature classroom and wildlife sanctuary.

Wendy Hanophy
Horizon High School
5321 E. 136th Ave.
Thornton, CO 80601

Interdisciplinary Nature Education: Using Legends

Pat Kane leads fifth grade teachers and their students in exploring natural history through legends and fables. For example, the "Legend of the Loon's Necklace" led to discovery of the natural history of loons through the disciplines of literature and storytelling, science, social studies, and art.

Pat Kane
Education Director
New Jersey Audubon Society
P.O. Box 693, Hardscrabble Road
Bernardsville, NJ 07924

Community Bat Education

Norma Lewis has conducted a regional effort to educate people about bats. She initiated the Bat Rescue Squad, an innovative bat education program in the Cincinnati area, in which volunteers rescued bats from houses, informed homeowners how to safely exclude bats from their homes, and distributed plans for constructing bat houses.

Norma Lewis
Curator of Education and the Museum
Toledo Zoo
2700 Broadway
Toledo, OH 43609

Student Action Project: Tall Grass Prairie Restoration

Judy Lowrey led her students to research and develop a six-acre "Land Lab" near their school. Programs involving nature appreciation and action include school lunch waste recycling and composting, and gathering and planting native plant seeds for a tall grass prairie restoration at the Lab.

Judy Lowrey
Tecumseh Elementary School
1058 Old Springfield Pike
Xenia, OH 45385

Horticulture Therapy for Handicapped Children

Judy Mann runs a horticultural therapy program for handicapped children. Using an interdisciplinary approach, teachers provide students with opportunities to participate in their community and promote gardening as a life skill.

Judy Mann
Director
Irons Oaks Environmental Learning Center
2453 Vollmer Road
Olympia Fields, IL 60461

Elementary Student Bird Walks

Juliet Markowsky of the Maine Audubon Society has created "Bird Adventures," a hands-on approach to bird walks for children in grades three to six, which focuses on bird identification and ecology.

Juliet Markowsky
1 Edgewood Drive
Orono, ME 04473

Community Action Project: Preserving Florida Scrub Land

Virginia T. McKinley involved a whole community, both children and adults, in preserving a natural area from development. The piece of Florida scrub land, a unique and endangered type of ecosystem, is now a nature study "outdoor classroom" for Babson Park Elementary School.

Virginia T. McKinley
Environmental Education Consultant
260 Britton Street
Babson Park, FL 33827

Environmental Education for Community Decision Makers

Alberto Mimo has created for the State of Connecticut the environmental education SEARCH program, an opportunity for high school students to get involved in environmental research and monitoring techniques. He also created the Community Environmental Education Program for town officials and other decision-making citizens who are faced with issues such as wetlands protection, effective use of databases and maps, and water quality assessment. The programs address specific local concerns and are arranged cooperatively with nature centers, land trusts, and other local organizations.

Alberto F. Mimo
Senior Environmental Analyst
Department of Environmental Protection
Education Unit, State Office Building
165 Capitol Ave.
Hartford, CT 06106

Student Action Project: Nestbox Program for Future Farmers

Myrna Pearman has developed an extension program that focuses on habitat conservation and the provision of nestboxes for native cavity nesting birds, especially bluebirds. The program is aimed specifically at rural children, those future farmers who will be directly responsible for sound land management.

Myrna Pearman
Biologist
Ellis Bird Farm Ltd.
Box 2980
Lacombe, Alberta, Canada TOC 150

Citizen Action Project for Local Nature Trails

Robert D. Reed organized and leads the Harvard Trail Guides, a cadre of citizens dedicated to conservation and education about their local natural areas. Reed and his volunteers meet weekly for nature walks and pass along their knowledge and enthusiasm to school children and their teachers. This past year Reed established an "Adopt a Trail" program in which local citizens walk the town of Harvard's trail system regularly to see that they are properly maintained for recreation and nature study.

Robert D. Reed
10 Barton Road
Harvard, MA 01451

Middle School Field Research Project

Harriette Roberts designed a pilot program for junior high school students that involved them in real field research projects, such as sensitive plant and animal surveys, and investigating the ecological impact of human encroachment on natural areas. The program was developed with the cooperation of personnel from the National Forest, Soil Conservation District, San Bernardino County Museum, and the University of California.

Harriette Roberts
Site Principal
Orange County Outdoor Science School
1829 Mentone Blvd.
Mentone, CA 92359

Community Awareness Event: All Species Day

Chris Wells, director of All Species Projects, creates awareness of humanity's ties with other living creatures through annual All Species Day celebrations. Curriculum packets available from All Species Projects enable children and people of all ages to explore a new theme each year by combining studies of ecology with festive activities such as parades and pageants.

Christopher Wells
All Species Projects
804 Apodaca Hill
Santa Fe, NM 87501

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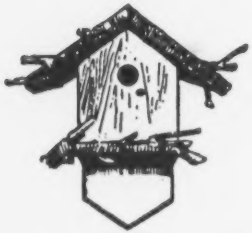

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